

abundant, and easily captured—so easily, in fact, that it quickly became extinct. After quoting many extracts from old authorities on the subject, Mr. Verrill comes to the conclusion that the “Cahow” was a “web-footed sea-bird,” not a Shearwater nor a Petrel of any kind, but possibly an Auk. It was strictly nocturnal in its habits. It came to the Bermudas in October to breed, and remained until June. It laid its single large white egg in burrows. It was about the size of a Pigeon, brown above and white beneath, and had a strong hooked bill. Now, what was the “Cahow”?

XXII.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters, addressed “to the Editors” :—

SIRS,—In volume iv. of the “Birds” (Fauna of British India, p. 278) Dr. Blanford states that he considers it almost certain that Jerdon and Blyth mistook the “Knots” which they obtained at Madras and in Calcutta for *Tringa canutus*, whereas they were really *T. crassirostris*. I therefore beg leave to draw the attention of your readers to the fact that I have to-day (January 16th) obtained in our Bazaar an undoubted Knot alive, the first that I have seen here. I may also add that the specimens 1592 A & B of Blyth’s ‘Catalogue’ are still in existence, and are *T. canutus*, as he said. It is evident, therefore, that this species visits the Indian Empire as well as *T. crassirostris*, though it is, of course, an irregular visitor, like so many others of our wild-fowl.

For instance, Baer’s Pochard (*Fuligula baeri*), which I have known to be occasionally common, has been scarce here for some years now; while, on the other hand, the Bronze-cap Teal (*Eunetta falcata*), formerly very scarce, has been arriving regularly for the last few years. This winter I have already obtained four specimens of the last-named Duck, although the season is an excessively bad one for water-fowl of all kinds. I have recorded many previous occurrences of

this species in our bazaar in my recent popular pamphlet 'How to know the Indian Ducks.'

Yours &c.,

Indian Museum, Calcutta.
1st March, 1902.

FRANK FINN.

SIRS,—In the article in last year's 'Ibis' on the "Birds of the Yenesi River," the two varieties of the Yellow Bunting figured on plate x. are referred to as *Emberiza citrinella molessoni* and *E. citrinella brehmi* of Homeyer. I have searched everywhere for Homeyer's description of *E. citrinella* var. *brehmi*, but cannot find it. Moreover, when in Brunswick in August last I examined all the Buntings in the Homeyer collection and the catalogues, and could find no reference to this name, so that I can only conclude that it has never been published. It appears, however, that Dr. C. L. Brehm was the first to recognise this form, as in his 'Vollständige Vogelfang,' p. 414 (1855), he describes it as follows:—" *Emberiza erythrogenys*, Brm. (*Ember. citrinella* auct.). Unseren grössten Goldammer ähnlich, aber etwas weniger schön mit weisslichen Flügelbinden, rostrothem Kinne und solchen Bachen- und Augestreifen bei in Männchen bei Sarepta." This form, therefore, if recognised as a subspecies, should stand as *Emberiza erythrogenys*, Brehm, and Mr. Zarudny's name *E. molessoni* must sink into a synonym.

Yours &c.,

28 Queensborough Terrace,
London, W.
6th March, 1902.

H. E. DRESSER.

News of Mr. Thomas Ayres.—Many of the readers of 'The Ibis' will be pleased to hear that the veteran ornithologist of the Transvaal, Mr. Thomas Ayres, of Potchefstroom, who was a frequent contributor to our pages from 1860 to 1886, has escaped the dangers of the Boer War and is still safe in his home in the Transvaal Colony. Writing to Mr. W. L. Selater on Dec. 4th, 1901, he says that, as it may be well supposed, he has been able to do very

little collecting during the past two years, no shooting having been permitted. But quite recently he has obtained leave to carry his gun along the river in the immediate vicinity of Potchefstroom, and has obtained a small number of specimens for the South African Museum. Mr. Ayres remarks that he does not quite believe in the so-called Russ's Weaver-bird (*Quelea russi*) being distinct from *Q. sanguinirostris*. In the Potchefstroom district the *Quelea* nests freely amongst the reeds, in company with *Pyromelæna oryx* and *Hyphantornis velatus*, and lays blue eggs, which are similar to those of the *Pyromelæna* and very difficult to identify. Mr. Ayres believes that *Quelea* is parasitic, and "often, if not always," lays its eggs in the nests of the Red Bishop-bird (*Pyromelæna*).

The British Dipper.—Amongst recent "Promotions" we have to record that of the "British Dipper," which has been elevated to the rank of a subspecies by Ritter v. Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen, as *Cinclus cinclus britannicus* (cf. Ornith. Jahrb. xiii. p. 69, 1892). The author of this feat states that the British form of *Cinclus* has nothing to do with the Mid-European *C. aquaticus*, but is more nearly allied to the Scandinavian *C. cinclus* (i. e. *C. melanogaster*, Br.). With the kind assistance of our foreign friends we are really beginning to know something about our native birds!

British Ornithologists abroad.—Captain BOYD ALEXANDER has returned to his duties in West Africa and has arrived safely at Cape Coast Castle. Before leaving England, as will be seen by our columns, he wrote for us an excellent account of the birds which he had observed and collected in the Gold Coast Colony during his service with the Ashanti Expedition, and he will no doubt be equally active on the present occasion.

MR. HENRY F. WITHERBY left England on February 20th, on a new ornithological expedition. This time he proposes to go to Western Persia, and to work the country between Bushire and Shiraz. He hopes to be able to penetrate into the mountainous district north-west of the latter town.

Mr. Witherby takes with him Mr. C. F. Camburn, an experienced professional taxidermist, who accompanied him up the White Nile in 1900, and will, no doubt, obtain excellent results, although we fear that Persia, however diligently it may be searched, is not capable of producing many absolute novelties in bird-life.

Mr. ALEXANDER WHYTE, after a rest in England, has returned to British East Africa, *viâ* Mombasa, but will be engaged principally in botanical collecting. He is, however, always ready to attend to the special requirements of his old correspondents.

Mr. SCOTT B. WILSON started on January 16th last for Tahiti, *viâ* New Zealand, with the intention of making a complete exploration of the Tahiti group and possibly going on to Samoa. On his passage down the Channel, however, we regret to learn, Mr. Wilson had the misfortune to break his leg, and was in consequence obliged to land at Plymouth. On his recovery he has determined to make a fresh start, but some months' rest are still absolutely necessary.

Capt. G. E. BARRETT-HAMILTON, F.Z.S., is "at the front" with the 5th Royal Irish Rifles, and is believed to be at present engaged in "guarding the lines of communication" near Vredefort Road, in the Orange Colony. But he is by no means neglectful of Natural History, and has lately sent several small contributions to the Zoological Society.

The last news we received from Mr. A. BLAYNEY PERCEVAL were dated from Takunga, British East Africa, where he holds a post in the Government Service. Mr. Perceval complains of its being an extremely poor place for birds, but was much pleased to have obtained a second specimen of *Machæramphus anderssoni*, "with a bat in its stomach" (*cf.* P. Z. S. 1899, p. 714).

Mr. E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO, we believe, has not yet returned from Tangier, where he has passed the winter. We hope soon to receive an account of his excursion into the Great Atlas in 1901, and further information on the new birds lately characterized by him in the Bull. B. O. C. (xii. p. 27).